



American Association of Oral
and Maxillofacial Surgeons

9700 West Bryn Mawr Avenue • Rosemont, Illinois 60018-5701 • 847/678-6200 • 1/800/822-6637 • FAX 847/678-6286 • www.aaoms.org

June 15, 2001

The Honorable John D. Dingell
2328 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Dingell:

The American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS) has reviewed HR 526, the "Bipartisan Patient Protection Act of 2001," sponsored by Representatives Ganske, Dingell and 136 of your colleagues to date, and respectfully requests your support for this vital measure.

We are especially pleased the bill contains language to prevent health plans from discriminating in payment policies based simply on the degree of the provider. As the dental specialty dedicated to the surgical treatment of the jaws, face and mouth, AAOMS members often encounter discriminatory practices from third-party payers that deny our patients equal access to care from an oral and maxillofacial surgeon. Too often patients are denied payment for covered procedures we perform simply because we hold dental degrees, not medical degrees. These decisions by health plans have nothing to do with quality, patient satisfaction or the ability of our doctors to deliver exemplary care to patients with diseases, injuries and defects of the functional and esthetic aspects of the head and neck.

This discriminatory and anti-competitive treatment is contrary to our historical experience under federal law. Oral and maxillofacial surgeons are recognized as "physicians" in the Medicare statute. Section 1861(r)(1) defines a "physician" as a "doctor of dental surgery or dental medicine who is legally authorized to practice dentistry by the State in which he performs such function and who is acting within the scope of his license when he performs such functions." For more than 80 years, oral and maxillofacial surgeons – who pioneered facial reconstruction techniques for trauma patients in medical combat units during both World Wars, Korea and Vietnam – have served as integral members of hospital trauma teams. Increasingly however, our ability to participate on such teams and provide the high quality care our patients deserve and our hospital colleagues support is being jeopardized by arbitrary health plan policies. Private patients deserve the same quality of and access to care as our Medicare and Medicaid patients. Enactment of S 283 will help to assure that every patient has full access to the critical care provided by oral and maxillofacial surgeons.



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Additionally, AAOMS strong supports a number of other provisions in HR 526, which will enhance the quality of care our patients receive. Specifically, under the provisions of the bill:

- Dental plans are included in the measure;
- A strong external review process is established; and
- All patients will have the opportunity to participate in a plan that permits them to choose the provider of their choice.

Therefore, AAOMS requests your support for HR 526 when it is considered in the House of Representatives. Enactment of the Bipartisan Patient Protection Act of 2001 will ensure our patients have the access to quality care they deserve.

Sincerely,

Francis P. DiPlacido DMD

Francis P. DiPlacido, DMD
President, American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons

cc: Board of Trustees
Committee on Government Affairs
Dr. Bob Rinaldi
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